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# IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLATFORM FOR ACTION ADOPTED AT THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN IN BEIJING 1995

## INFORMATION NOTE ON EUROPEAN COMMISSION ACTIVITIES PREPARED FOR THE ECE REGIONAL MEETING ON THE 2000 REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION

Geneva, 19-20 January 2000

Prepared by the European Commission

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

**A. Introduction**

**B. Overview of the achievements in the fields discussed at the meeting**

**I. Women and the Economy**
- Gender mainstreaming in the European Employment strategy
- Entrepreneurship
- The Structural Funds as an instrument to improve the participation of women in the labour market.
- The NOW Strand of the Employment Community Initiative
- Reconciliation of work and family life – Parental Leave and Childcare

**II. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women**
- The Group of Commissioners on equal opportunities
- The Treaty of Amsterdam and equal opportunities
- Equality Mechanisms at the Departmental Level
- Information for Women
- Personnel and Administration
- Women and Science
- Development co-operation
- Gender mainstreaming policy
- Obstacles encountered
- Plans for the future

**III. Women and violence**
- Trafficking in women and children for sexual exploitation
- European campaign to raise awareness on violence against women
- Sexual harassment
- Combating violence against women through development co-operation
- Women and armed conflict

**IV. Women in power and decision-making**
- Examples of obstacles encountered/lessons learned
- Commitment to further action/new initiatives

## A. Introduction

The declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women in September 1995 represented a landmark in the field of gender equality world-wide. It gave the European Community an opportunity to prove its determination to continue taking a vital lead in the advancement of women. The three principles which underlie the Platform - the promotion and protection of the human rights of women, the empowerment of women and gender mainstreaming - have proved to be essential springboards to further gender equality at European Union level. The European Parliament made an active contribution to this.

The European Commission participated in the Beijing conference representing the European Community, which has observer status in the UN. It was also fully involved in the preparation of the European Union positions at the conference. The European Commission also lent its support to the NGO Forum and to NGOs in the EU and across the world to participate in the Forum and the conference.

In the review process of the Beijing Platform for Action, which took place in the framework of the annual sessions of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission services prepared position papers on the various strategic objectives of the Platform from 1997 to 1999.

The European Community has developed over the past five years activities for the attainment of all 12 strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action, which are inter-linked and crosscut several areas of its policies. The present document, without being exhaustive, gives an overview of the main developments at EU level since the Beijing conference regarding the four issues to be addressed by the ECE Regional Preparatory Meeting on the 2000 Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (Geneva 19-21 January 2000):
(i) Women in the economy
(ii) Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women
(iii) Women and violence (including women in war/conflict situations)
(iv) Women in power and decision-making.

A complete overview of implementation activities covering the Platform as a whole is currently being prepared for transmission to the U.N.

The European Commission attaches great importance to the full involvement of NGOs in the Beijing follow-up process. The European Women's Lobby has played a leading role in co-ordinating the participation of EU women's and development NGOs in the lead up to the Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Beijing+5.

Further preparations for the Special Session will take place at EU level in Brussels on 3-4 February 2000. This European conference will bring together representatives from the EU Member States and institutions, EFTA and the states that are candidates to the EU, as well as Council of Europe and UN representatives, NGOs, social partners and academics.

Finally, it has to be noted that this information note does not commit the European Commission.

## B. Overview of the achievements in the fields discussed at the meeting

### I. Women and the Economy

To promote women's economic rights and independence means tackling questions of access to employment, appropriate working conditions, markets and resources, the elimination of occupational segregation and employment discrimination and the promotion of a harmonisation of work and family responsibilities for women and men.

These key issues form the core of the different strategic objectives of the Platform for Action to improve women's economic capacity. They are also central to the European Union's employment strategy in the recognition that women's full participation in the labour market is necessary for Europe's economic and social development and its ability to grow and prosper.

***Gender mainstreaming in the European Employment strategy***

Since 1998 the new employment chapter in the Amsterdam Treaty was implemented and co-ordinated European guidelines for Member State employment policies were applied. The guidelines are aimed at making people more employable, at building a strong entrepreneurial culture, at creating a more flexible labour market and at strengthening equal opportunities for women and men. Each year, guidelines on employment policy are proposed by the Commission and discussed by Council. The aim of reinforcing equality between women and men has been inserted from the very beginning of this important process. This new strategy has proved to be very successful to reinforce Member States' actions on equality.

The so-called 'equal opportunities pillar' in the employment guidelines concerns three main issues: reducing the gender gap (on unemployment rates, employment rates and wages), reconciling work and family and enabling women and men to return to the labour market. Guidelines for employment policy have been proposed for the first time in September 1997, on the basis of which Member States have proposed national action plans on employment.

New guidelines for 2000 employment policy were agreed at the Helsinki European Council in December 1999. It is recognised that equality of opportunity is at the heart of the process of reforming the EU labour markets. Member States have committed themselves to mainstream equality in all four pillars of action of their employment policies. This commitment was added for the first time to the employment guidelines in 1999. It is of crucial importance and has far-reaching consequences on equal opportunities policy. It means that not just the fourth pillar of the employment guidelines is dedicated to equal opportunities, but that the equality objective is integrated in all pillars. It will automatically lead to a systematic gender proof reading of all measures proposed. Many of them seem gender neutral, but some of them are not. Applying gender mainstreaming implies the setting up of a whole new process in many Member States, which will lead to a critical assessment of policy measures and the design of a new, more equality-friendly, policy. In order to evaluate progress on this approach, Member States should provide for adequate data collection systems and procedures.

Furthermore, the employment guidelines for 2000 call on the Member States to continue their efforts to take appropriate measures to tackle the gender pay gap by initiating positive steps to promote equal pay for work of equal value and to diminish differentials in incomes between women and men. Policy should enable women and men to reconcile work and family life. Therefore, renewed attention on care provisions for all dependent workers is essential. Affordable, accessible and high quality care services for children

and other dependants should be promoted, as well as family-friendly policies, and parental and other leave schemes. Specific attention should be given to women and men considering a return to the paid workforce.

Gender mainstreaming in the European employment strategy is often referred to as one of the best examples for mainstreaming. Once the Amsterdam Treaty was concluded and the new employment chapter has been inserted, the consensus grew on the insertion of a 'equal opportunities pillar' in the employment guidelines. Member States and the European Parliament agreed to this approach. No discussion was held on the necessity of the equality pillar as such. The insertion of quantified targets and timetables were the subject of discussion. This whole process has brought the discussion of equal opportunities to the highest political level, the European Council.

***Obstacles encountered***

The first round of National Action Plans on employment (NAPs), in 1998, has shown that most Member States have not yet put enough emphasis on strengthening equality. Gender is not yet fully mainstreamed in the NAPs. Further efforts are needed to attack the gender gap, to allow women and men to reconcile work and family and to return to work. Indicators and benchmarks at national level should be further developed.

***Plans for the future***

The annual exercise of adopting employment guidelines, NAPs and drafting Joint Employment Reports permits continuity and annual revision and improvement. The Commission assessment of the 1999 NAPs and the employment guidelines for 2000 were proposed by the Commission in September 1999 and adopted by the European Council in Helsinki (December 1999). For the first time, concrete recommendations on employment policy were made to the Member States (including recommendations on gender equality). [1]

***Entrepreneurship***

The Council Decision of 9 December 1996 [2] for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the European Union (1997 to 2000) includes the following objective "to promote entrepreneurship and support the target groups." The target groups include women and young entrepreneurs and enterprises run by entrepreneurs from disadvantaged groups.

The Council Decision specified that this objective would be achieved through provision of *"Support for efforts to find innovative solutions after identifying the specific problems faced by: Women entrepreneurs and young entrepreneurs".*

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1 Joint Employment Report for 1999 (COM(99)442 of 8.9.1999), Employment Guidelines 2000 (COM(99)441 of 8.9.1999), Commission Recommendation for Council Recommendations on the implementation of Member States' Employment Policies (COM(99)445 of 8.9.1999) are available on http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg05/key_en.htm

2 Council Resolution of 9 December 1996 on realizing the full potential of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) , including micro-enterprises and the craft sector, through an integrated approach to improving the business environment and stimulating business support measures, OJ C 018 , 17/01/1997 p. 1-5

To this end, the Commission, Enterprise DG, co-financed a Conference on 'Women Co-entrepreneurs, Entrepreneurs and Business Owners', which was held in Copenhagen on 5-6 September 1997. The main themes of the Conference were related to women entrepreneurs and business start-ups and transfers, finance and marketing; training requirements in the field of management; Social status, ownership, tax questions, rights and status in the event of divorce, widowhood and unemployment.

The recommendations of the Copenhagen Conference helped preparing the Third European Conference on craft and small businesses, which took place in Milan (20-21 November 1997). They were also reflected in the conclusions of the Milan Conference, requesting support for small and craft businesses targeting young entrepreneurs, women entrepreneurs and assisting spouses which represent untapped job-creating potential.

Five projects have been co-financed as part of the general call for proposals launched in April 1997 relating to craft and small businesses, five projects were selected that aimed specifically at promoting women entrepreneurship:

- To encourage women entrepreneurs to make greater use of electronic networks;
- To establish a European network of business advisers to provide women entrepreneurs with training and information on all aspects of business management, and particularly on EU measures affecting small businesses;
- To create of a network of support centres for women and young entrepreneurs;
- To strengthen the role of women and young people within craft and small business sector by promoting entrepreneurship in selected educational institutions.
- To develop of a network of resource centres where experienced business-people can act as "mentors" for women entrepreneurs and where the specific problems relating to the sector can be addressed.

All these projects, which should be completed within two years, are now being implemented and will be publicised as soon as completed.

In addition, the Enterprise DG has also launched in August 1998 an overall call for proposals in the field of training and related services to SMEs, that included a pilot-action whose objective is to: "promote the development and/or dissemination of recognised training courses for assisting spouses [3]. Four projects have been selected.

***Obstacles encountered***

Among the difficulties encountered is the identification of the very specific needs of women entrepreneurs or would be entrepreneurs as distinct from the general needs of entrepreneurs. Another difficulty has been to identify representative organisations of women entrepreneurs in all Member States, which may help fine-tuning the identification process, the setting up of pilot-actions and informing policies.

In order to tackle these difficulties, the Commission has launched within the framework of a call for tender published in July 1998, a study on young entrepreneurs, women entrepreneurs, co-entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs from ethnic minorities. The objectives of this study is to examine the specific characteristics of each of the target groups (young entrepreneurs, women entrepreneurs, co-entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs from ethnic minorities) and the obstacles faced by them in setting up and maintaining a

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[3] http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg23/craft/craft-women/craft-women.html

successful business. The study will also identify the organisations that are the most representative of each target group at a national and European level. The results of this study should be available by the end of 1999.

***The Structural Funds as an instrument to improve the participation of women in the labour market.***

The Structural Funds constitute the main Community financial instrument for correcting regional imbalances and for improving employment and integration prospects in Europe. The overall budget for the years 1994-1999 was € 163 billion. Almost€ 195 billion are allocated to the new Structural Funds programming period covering the years 2000-2006. The contribution of the Structural Funds to the promotion of equality between women and men can therefore be of great significance.

The Funds, especially the European Social Fund, support measures aimed at business start-up, horizontal desegregation and improvement of women's skill through training schemes. Since 1994 equal opportunities has appeared not only under specific measures targeted at women but also as a general principle to be respected in all measures' implementation.

Although, the ESF was the first Fund to take the issue of equal opportunities into consideration, all Structural Funds have become progressively involved in the promotion of equality. Over the last years, some specific initiative were launched in the framework of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) with special impact for women. The implementation of equal opportunities in the Structural Funds monitored in the Annual Report on Equal Opportunities of European Commission.

Following increased attention to the Structural Funds as an instrument for equality between women and men, a Council resolution on 'Mainstreaming Equal Opportunities for women and men into the European Structural Funds' was adopted in 1996 [4]. The key points of this resolution were the more effective mainstreaming of equal opportunities into existing monitoring mechanisms, into evaluations and reviews of current programming periods. The resolution also asked the Commission to take gender mainstreaming into direct consideration when preparing its proposals for the reform of the Funds.

The current round of Structural Funds is due to expire at the end of 1999. On 18 March 1998, the European Commission adopted five draft Structural Funds Regulations which were approved by the Council of Ministers in June 1999 [5]. The new Structural Funds will contribute to promoting equality between women and men through a dual strategy: mainstreaming and developing specific actions targeted at women. According to the new regulations, the gender dimension must be taken into account in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluations phases.

***The NOW Strand of the Employment Community Initiative***

Within the overall framework of the Structural Funds, the NOW strand of the Employment Community Initiative (New Opportunities for Women) focuses on improving participation by women in the labour market, on reducing unemployment among women and on improving the position of those already in the work force.

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[4] Council Resolution of 2 December 1996 on mainstreaming equal opportunities for men and women into the European Structural Funds, OJ C 386 , 20/12/1996 p. 1 - 3

[5] OJ L 161 of 26/06/1999

With a budget of almost one billion € for the five year period 1994-1999, NOW was the largest programme in the EU for testing and implementing new ideas for women's training and employment. By the end of the programme in December 1999, around 1750 projects across Europe had been funded. More than half the projects addressed some aspects of business creation. About a third of projects addressed the horizontal and vertical desegregation of the labour market. Other projects are focusing on jobs traditionally filled by women, such as in the health and care sectors, and aiming to develop professional profiles and qualifications to give the jobs appropriate recognition and value.

***Obstacles encountered***

Although the Structural Funds, especially the European Social Fund is the major source of financing for equal opportunities at European level, evaluations of the ESF activities from a gender perspective carried out in 1996 showed that the overall impact of Structural Funds on equal opportunities remains modest. The actual share of ESF funds devoted to specific measures for women was at about 2% of total ESF spending. Women represent 42% of all ESF participants. Improvements had been noted, however, during the current programming period. Measures were found to be more diversified than in the previous programmes. In addition to training measures, there were numerous guidance and advice measures, recruitment assistance for young women and measures for childcare.

***Reconciliation of work and family life – Parental Leave and Childcare***

Council Directive 96/34/EC of 3 June 1996 [6] on parental leave provides for the minimum provision of three months (unpaid) leave for both male and female employees in the case of the birth or adoption of a child. It also provides that working parents should be given paid time off work to deal with family emergencies such as the illness or accident of a child.

The Directive had to be implemented in the Member States by 3 June 1998, but Ireland and Austria delayed their implementation for 6 and 12 months respectively, and the UK had until 15 December 1999. In 2000 the Commission will adopt a report on the Directive's implementation in the Member States. In the meantime a number of infringement proceedings for incorrect implementation of the Directive have been launched.

A report [7] on the implementation of Directive 92/85/EEC of 19 October 1992 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breast-feeding was adopted by the Commission in March 1999. This report states that, on the whole, the Directive has been correctly implemented. The Commission has, nevertheless, initiated infringement proceedings against a number of Member States in respect of particular problems, such as leave for health and safety reasons, the two weeks compulsory maternity leave, and bans on pregnant women working in certain occupations.

The Fourth Action Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (1996-2000) [8] highlights the importance of affordable and good quality care for children and other dependants in the family. The Commission services are currently analysing the European research available on effective policies in this field and assessing current policy trends at national, European and global level. Diverse issues such as

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[6] OJ L145 of 19.6.1996.

[7] COM (1999) 100 final

[8] Official Journal L 335 , 30/12/1995 p. 37 - 43

quality in care services, provision and organisation of information, family leave, and incentives and disincentives for employee and employer participation in family friendly policies are under consideration. The Commission has published a report entitled "Care In Europe" on this subject.

Policy work on care is informed and complemented by a range of funding initiatives under the Fourth Action Programme. These include: an inventory of current EU level research on childcare and eldercare, focus groups encouraging young women and men to reconsider their roles in the family and in respect of childcare, men on parental leave, employer information services to promote the benefits of family friendly policy and research on good practice for care in the work place.

In 1998 the Commission published a report on the implementation in the Member States of the 1992 Council Recommendation on Childcare [9]. This complements the publication in 1996 of a guide to good practice on work and childcare (Social Europe Supplement 5/96).

## II. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women

Both the European Commission and the European Parliament have mechanisms, which ensure high-level commitment to the promotion of equality for women and men and to gender mainstreaming.

The European Parliament, especially its Committee on equal opportunities and women's rights, is particularly active to ensure that gender equality takes a key place in European Union policies. The Committee prepares draft opinions and resolutions for adoption by Parliament. The activities and impact of the work undertaken by the Committee have expanded, in particular as a result of the increased representation of women in the European Parliament following the European elections in 1999. The Committee has proven an ardent advocate of women's rights and serves as a watchdog ensuring gender sensitivity in EU policies.

In the Council of Ministers, gender equality is mainly part of the Employment and Social Affairs agenda. Gender issues are also addressed in the Human Rights group of the Council (COHOM) as well as in the development co-operation group.

***The Group of Commissioners on equal opportunities***

The Group of Commissioners on equal opportunities was set up in 1995 and is chaired by the President of the Commission. It has four permanent members (President Prodi, Mr Kinnock and Ms Reding and Ms Diamantopoulou. Other Commissioners participate on an ad hoc basis. The Commission includes five women (25 %). The Group of Commissioners fulfils an important role in signalling the high-level commitment to the promotion of equal opportunities for women and men in the European Community. The Group was instrumental in the Commission's adoption of its policy on gender mainstreaming (the Commission Communication on: "Incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all Commission policies" (COM(96) 67 final)) and has regularly interacted with the EP Women's Rights Committee and the European Women's Lobby.

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[9] 92/241/EEC

The effects of the work of the Group of Commissioners were most visible in the employment sector, in the new regulations for the Structural Funds, the development co-operation, the fight against violence against women and the programmes in the field of education and vocational training.

***The Treaty of Amsterdam and equal opportunities***

The legal basis for promoting equal opportunities for women and men has been greatly improved by the Treaty of Amsterdam, which entered into force on 1 May 1999. The new Treaty represents one of the most important achievements for gender equality at Community level.

In the Amsterdam Treaty equality for women and men becomes one of the explicit objectives (Article 2). Mainstreaming was given a legal basis in Article 3. This obliges the Community, to aim to eliminate inequalities, and promote equality, between women and men in all its activities.

The scope of the earlier provision (Article 119, Treaty of Rome) on equal pay for women and men was broadened in the Amsterdam Treaty. Now, in Article 141 (which replaces Article 119), the Treaty provides for equality not only for equal work, but also for work of equal value and for equal treatment in employment and occupations more generally. For the first time, the Treaty also expressly encourages Member States to take positive actions in favour of the disadvantaged or under-represented sex.

***Equality Mechanisms at the Departmental Level***

At the level of the Commission services, mechanisms for the promotion of women, of equal opportunities for women and men or the integration of gender issues are located in the Employment and Social Affairs DG, in the Personnel and Administration DG, in the Research DG, the External relations DG, the Development DG and the statistical office Eurostat. [10]

An inter-departmental group of officials on equal opportunities meets 3-4 times a year for exchange of information and co-ordination of equal opportunity activities. Besides this, there were a number of working groups on specific issues, such as the Structural Funds reform. A Group of gender mainstreaming officials has prepared a Guide to gender impact assessment and reports on progress in implementing the Commission's policy of gender mainstreaming.

The Unit for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and matters regarding Families and Children, Employment and Social Affairs DG, promotes equal opportunities for women and men within the EU.

The action programme builds on the achievements of the first three Community action programmes, and these has played an important role in improving the situation of women in the labour market, the society and in promoting co-operation at all levels in this field. The fourth programme also introduced a new concept by establishing gender mainstreaming as the overriding principle. This confirmed the Commission's dual approach to achieving gender equality, that is the continuation of specific actions targeted at women accompanied by the integration of the gender dimension throughout the policy process and activities of the EU and the Member States.

Under the programme, action projects and studies are carried out in the fields of gender mainstreaming, equal opportunities for women and men in a changing economy, especially in the fields of education,

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[10] These mechanisms are described in detail in the Commission report to the 43rd session of the UN CSW - March 1999.

vocational training and the labour market, reconciling work and family life for women and men, promoting gender balance in decision-making and making conditions conducive to exercising equality rights.

***Information for Women***

From January 2000 the Women's Information Section of the Commission, previously located in the Information, Communication and Culture DG, has joined the Unit for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in the Employment and Social Affairs DG. Its mandate is to disseminate information about Community action in favour of women and also to ensure an ongoing dialogue between the European Commission and women throughout the EU. Information is disseminated through the newsletter "*Women of Europe*", which contains news on EU activities from the specific viewpoint of its impact on women. The newsletter appears in eleven languages and is distributed to women's associations and networks, libraries and individuals throughout the EU. Information is also disseminated through a specific web-site [11]. Another publication of the sector is the *Women of Europe Dossier* published thrice a year on a specific item. The last dossier was on women and sustainable development.

The Women's Information Section works closely with national women's organisations and associations which act as multipliers, providing access for their members to EU policies and programmes.

For the last two years (1998 and 1999) the Section issued an annual call for proposals encouraging public and private organisations within the territory of the EU to submit proposals for information and communication projects with a transnational dimension, targeting women.

The Section is also responsible for the European campaign to raise awareness on violence against women.

***Personnel and Administration***

The main task of the Equal Opportunities Unit in the Personnel and Administration DG is related to the implementation of the Third Action Programme for women and men in the European Commission (1997-2000). The programme aims:

- to develop a gender-sensitive working culture which takes into account female and male values, needs and priorities;
- to improve the compatibility of work and family responsibilities;
- to develop the professional abilities of women in order to give them an even share of responsibilities and to bring them to the decision-making levels;
- to raise staff awareness.

Since 1995, the European Commission has fixed targets for the recruitment and the appointment of women in certain management positions (director, head of unit and adviser) in order to reduce the under-representation of women at decision-making level. The improvement is slow but steady (directors: four women in 1995, 19 in 1999; heads of unit : 10.9 % women in 1995, 14.8% in 1999).

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[11] http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg10/women/index_en.html

The Unit is assisted in its work by a committee (COPEC) made up of representatives of the administration and the staff unions. It has an advisory role, but can also make recommendations and present proposals. In 1998 an inter-COPEC working group was set up to examine the Staff Regulations from the point of view of equal opportunities. Recommendations were made for submission to the Reflection Group on Staff Policy.

***Women and Science***

The "Women and Science" Sector in the Research DG was set up on 1 January 1999 [12]. Its mandate is to co-ordinate implementation of the action plan presented in the Communication on *Women and science: mobilising women to enrich European research* [13]. This action plan has a twofold objective:

- to stimulate discussion and the sharing of experience among the Member States to promote women in science so that action can be taken as effectively as possible at all levels of power;

- to develop a coherent approach towards promoting women in research financed by the Union, with the aim of significantly increasing the number of women involved in research during the period of the Fifth Framework Programme. The Commission's aim is to achieve at least a 40% representation for women in Marie Curie scholarships, advisory groups and assessment/monitoring panels.

The schemes and measures undertaken form a dynamic and evolving system known as "*the gender and science watch system*" which includes, by way of example, emphasis on the increasing number of women involved in consultation and decision-making processes, impact studies and the improvement of statistics. The challenge of gender will be kept under constant review.

The Research DG commissioned a report from a group of women scientists in the European Technology Assessment Network, which is available since in November 1999 [14]. The report analyses the situation of women scientists and contains a series of recommendations for measures to gender mainstream the field of research and development. This report will be discussed in a wide conference "Women and science: making the change happen" organised in Brussels on 4-5 April 2000.

***Development co-operation***

The Commission's Communication on Integrating Gender in Development Co-operation of 18/09/95 was prepared concurrently with the Beijing Conference and shares its dual focus on the importance of integrating gender analysis throughout all development interventions, while also initiating large-scale positive action against gender inequalities. The Council Resolution on Integrating Gender in Development Co-operation, dated 20 December 1995, sets out key principles and strategies for gender sensitive development co-operation. It states that these main guidelines "translate into the field of development co-operation the political commitments undertaken at the Fourth World Conference on Women". The

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12 http://www.cordis.lu/improving/src/hp_women.htm

13 COM (1999) 76 final

14 http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg12/press/1999/pr1211en.html

Resolution was followed by the Council Regulation of December 1998 on integrating of gender issues in development co-operation [15].

The development co-operation services of the Commission are located at the Development DG. In it *Gender and Development Desks* are now concentrated to further organise and strengthen the implementation of the 1995 Council Resolution on Integrating Gender Issues in Development Co-operation. Their work is backed by gender focal points at the various geographical desks in Brussels, at country level and work in close co-ordination with National Gender Experts of the Member States, and the OECD/DAC Working Party on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women.

The Commission channels financial support for follow up to the Beijing Platform for Action through WIDE (Women in Development Europe) to Latin America and through UNIFEM to Western Asia. A study on the role of NGOs in promoting gender issues is supported in Lebanon, through OXFAM/UKI.

Important instruments and mechanisms used are the Gender Impact Assessment Form and Guidelines, project cycle management and the network of Gender Focal Points. Since 1995 a number of projects and programmes have been funded through the special budget line for gender and development, and also through the regular budget lines for development co-operation. Some of the more important projects are included in the various parts of this report.

***Gender mainstreaming policy***

The Commission policy on gender mainstreaming was set out in the Commission Communication adopted on 21 January 1996 entitled: "Incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all Community policies and activities" [16]. Since then considerable resources have been allocated to developing the policy of gender mainstreaming in Community policies and activities. There was a strong will in the Commission to act upon the clear commitment expressed by the EU delegation at Beijing and to accelerate the process towards *de facto* equality. The Commission expressed its intention of "mobilising all general policies and measures specifically for the purpose of achieving equality, by actively and openly taking into account at the planning stage their possible effects on the respective situations of women and men (gender perspective)". The gender mainstreaming policy involves interdepartmental co-operation, appropriate tools and training and regular monitoring. [17] A dual, or two-track, approach is followed: the implementation of gender mainstreaming does not in any way imply the reduction or playing down of specific positive action measures in favour of women.

***Obstacles encountered***

Obstacles to gender mainstreaming were identified in the Progress report from the Commission on the Communication: "Incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all Community policies and activities", adopted on 4 March 1998 [18]. These included lack of awareness at the decision-making levels,

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15 Council Regulation (EC) No 2836/98 of 22 December 1998 on integrating of gender issues in development co-operation, OJ L 354 , 30/12/1998 p. 5 - 9

16 COM(96) 67 final of 21.2.1996

17 The gender mainstreaming policy is described in more detail in the Commission report to the 43rd meeting of UN CSW in March 1999. A Progress report of the Commission (COM(1998) 122 final, 4.3.1998) was adopted in March 1998.

18 (COM(1998) 122 final, 4.3.1998

lack of resources and lack of expertise in gender issues. It was concluded that the two-track approach would be followed, combining specific measures of positive action along with the further development of tools and instruments for gender mainstreaming. A second progress report is due for adoption in 2000.

***Plans for the future***

Among the plans for overcoming the obstacles and further developing the mainstreaming approach, is the organisation of awareness-raising and training targeting the very top level, introduction of a formal system of gender impact assessment of Commission policy and legislative proposals. Increasing emphasis is being placed on the need for EU wide sex-disaggregated statistics and gender relevant data. Inter-institutional co-operation gender mainstreaming, involving the Commission, European Parliament and Member States, will be strengthened. Regular monitoring will be continued.

## III. Women and violence

The role of the Commission in this policy field is to support actions through the DAPHNE and STOP Programmes, to support research, to co-ordinate policies including gender mainstreaming in the co-operation in Justice and Home Affairs, and to develop a European awareness-raising campaign. The issues of violence against and trafficking in women were first raised in the context of the European Union in 1996 with the Communication on Trafficking in women [19] and the STOP Programme [20], followed by the DAPHNE Initiative launched in 1997 [21]. Since then many important initiatives have been taken, both at the level of the Union, as well as within the Member States. The main objective of the European Commission has been to assure that the issue of violence against women, including the fight against trafficking in women, is put high on the political agenda of the European Union. The objective has been to support and promote further actions and closer co-operation and co-ordination among the Member States as well as improving the training of persons responsible in the different public departments while respecting the principle of "subsidiarity".

Other priorities have been to support and promote close co-operation with, and among non-governmental organisations active in this field, to improve statistics and information on violence against women, to encourage preventive measures and to strengthen the protection of victims of violence (more than 100 European transnational projects since 1997 through DAPHNE Initiative in 1997-99. Budget : 3 M € each year, 5 M € in 1999). The Initiative is now succeeded by the DAPHNE Programme (2000-2003) adopted in December 1999. This Programme is based on the experiences gathered under the DAPHNE Initiative and provides for a four-year Community action programme of € 5 million per year (€ 20 million in total). It permits multi-annual actions, it is open to public bodies in addition to NGOs and it will be opened to the applicant states and the EEA/EFTA countries.

One clear development of the last years is that violence against women is no longer considered to be a private matter. Recent initiatives, taken within some Members States, show increased attention to the fact that domestic violence is often systematically repeated over a period of time. Also, psychological violence is being

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19 COM(96)567 final

20 Official Journal L 322 , 12/12/1996 p.7 - 10

21 http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/project/daphne/en/index.htm

increasingly recognised as a criminal offence. There are a number of important initiatives that show that the focus is slowly turning towards the perpetrator.

Changing the existing legal framework is only one aspect of the combating of violence against women. A multidisciplinary approach is needed. The DAPHNE Programme will contribute to this end.

***Trafficking in women and children for sexual exploitation***

The European Union has developed, since 1996, a European wide approach in the fight against trafficking in women. This approach is characterised by the central focus put on the victims of trafficking and on the need to involve all the persons responsible for the fight against this degrading form of violation of human rights and human dignity. The Union considers that action is needed throughout the trafficking chain of recruiters, transporters, exploiters and clients. Preventive measures and repressive measures, as well as measures to support the victims, must be taken. And international co-operation must be encouraged.

In a first Communication on trafficking in women for the purpose of sexual exploitation in 1996 the Commission developed a European strategy to prevent and fight against this phenomenon. The Council of Ministers then adopted a successful incentive and exchange programme on 29 November 1996 to support training, seminars and studies etc., the STOP Programme [22]. The programme has already co-financed 67 projects in the area of trafficking and sexual exploitation of children. It has a budget of 6.5 M€for an initial period of five years coming to an end with the year 2000. The priorities set for the implementation for the programme in the year 2000 include prevention and assistance to victims. In 1996 the mandate of Europol was also extended in order to enable the organisation to deal also with trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation. For the year 2000 several activities in the aegis of Europol are foreseen, e.g. training courses.

The initial steps in 1996 were in 1997 followed by two new initiatives. First the Joint Action of February 1997 whereby the Member States agreed to review their national legislation with a view to criminalise a number of offences and to introduce specific and serious sanctions as regards trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The Joint Action also addressed a number of horizontal issues such as mutual legal assistance. Secondly, the DAPHNE Initiative (see above) that was set up to fill a gap regarding the possibilities for NGOs to develop their activities to combat violence against children, young people and women, including therefore support to projects in the field of trafficking.

In a second Communication on further Actions in the Fight against Trafficking in Women in December 1998 [23] the Commission seeks to indicate the state of play and to identify gaps as well as to recommend a number of targeted new initiatives and the deepening of certain existing actions to the various parties. The main objectives of the Communication are:

- to assure that the question of trafficking remains high on the political agenda;
- to reinforce international and European co-operation including both governments and NGOs in countries of origin, transit and destination;
- to strengthen a multi-disciplinary approach focusing on both prevention, research, law-enforcement and an effective sentencing of traffickers, as well as on support to victims;
- to address a clear message to the Candidate Countries, in the context of the accession process, of the necessity to take national measures and to co-operate with the EU already now on the issue.

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22 http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/project/stop_en.htm

23 COM(98)726 final

The most recent development in the field of trafficking within the EU are the conclusions from the European Council in Tampere that clearly gives priority to the fight against trafficking in human beings, for instance in point 48 of the conclusions trafficking is pointed out as one of the sectors where approximation of national criminal law is particularly relevant. Thus, there is a clear mandate for further action in the fight against trafficking in women.

Furthermore, in a wider international context the EU participates in its external actions on the issue of trafficking in fora such as the UN (e.g. Draft Convention on organised Crime and additional protocols of which one concerns human trafficking), G8 and the Council of Europe. Important external actions are also taking place under the umbrella of the New Transatlantic Agenda. Within this framework the EU and the US have in co-operation financed and carried out information campaigns in Eastern Europe to prevent trafficking in women. Currently campaigns are ongoing in Hungary and Bulgaria.

Further, the most recent initiative at the level of the EU is the Communication on further actions in the fight against trafficking in women. The main objectives were to increase co-operation and co-ordination among the Member States, and the applicant states, to strengthen the protection of victims of trafficking, especially those who are ready to act as witness. The objective was also to strengthen the co-operation with non-governmental organisations in this field. In the framework of the December 1998 Communication, the Commission is planning to propose a legal action concerning a temporary permit of stay for victims of trafficking in human beings.

Among the progress achieved so far an important element is the establishment by the Council of the multi-annual financing programme STOP. This programme was established in 1996 to create a new framework for training, information, study and exchange actions as part of a co-ordinated multidisciplinary approach to this problem. The programme, managed by the Commission, is the only instrument of this type on the European level. With a budget of 6.5 M € for an initial period of five years, since 1996 several transnational projects addressing the issue of trafficking in women have been supported.

Further, new preventive information campaigns have been launched in Hungary and Bulgaria in the framework of the EU-US Transatlantic dialogue in cooperation with the International Orgnisation for Migrations. Such campaigns were already successfully carried out with EU financial support in the Ukraine and Poland in 1998 [24]. The EU should also rapidly adopt joint negotiation elements on the UN Protocol on trafficking in human beings taking its own "acquis" into account.

Finally, in Latin America, with support from the budget-line on Integrating Gender Issues in Development Co-operation, a pilot research project concerning awareness raising, collecting and dissemination of information concerning trafficking in woman was initiated in Colombia (contribution 150.000 €).

***European campaign to raise awareness on violence against women***

The European Commission, in collaboration with Parliament, conducts since the end of 1998 a European awareness-raising campaign on violence against women following a Parliament Resolution of 1997 [25]. Several

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[24] Under the Phare Democracy programme, La Strada (foundation based in Poland) implemented a project (EC contribution: 100.000 ECU) to expose the trafficking in women as a violation of human rights and to help the victims and the women most at risk.

[25] EP Resolution on the need to establish a European Union-wide campaign for zero tolerance of violence against women 16.09.1997 (OJ C 304, 6.10.1997, p. 55) (Marianne ERIKSSON Report)

important activities are envisaged during this campaign which will close in May 2000. The campaign is centred primarily on the prevention of domestic violence and calls for the collective and individual responsibility of men and women to fight it. It is based on the conviction that any violent act against to women constitutes a serious violation of human rights, and harms the dignity and integrity of women. It is centred on the message of "zero tolerance of violence" and aims, by means of publicity, to contribute to stressing that violence against women has serious effects for the victim, its environment, including the children victims of violent scenes, and on the whole of society. This campaign intends therefore to involve numerous actors of civil society, including NGOs, to contribute to creating the conditions of a change of mentalities in particular among young people and men.

Several activities took place within this framework, since 1998. In June 1998, under the UK Presidency, the Commission organised a preparatory meeting in Brussels to determine the guidelines to be given. Under Austrian Presidency, a seminar on the role of the police in the fight against violence and the specific situation of migrant women took place in Baden at the end of 1998. The NGOs gathered on this occasion adopted 52 recommendations, addressed to the Member States and the European Institutions. On 8 March 1999, the Commission made a statement on violence before the EP and launched a campaign of a white ribbon symbolising zero tolerance towards violence against women. A European ministerial conference was held in Cologne at the end of March 1999, organised jointly by the Commission and the German Presidency, with the participation of the relevant ministries of the 15 Member States and of several applicant countries of Central and Eastern Europe, as well as members of the EP and representatives of NGOs specialised in the field of domestic violence. The conclusions of the Cologne conference contain ten specific recommendations supplementing the work of the Baden conference.

A European opinion poll was carried out between March and May 1999, among more than 16 000 Europeans in the 15 Member States to measure the perception of the extent of the phenomenon of violence against women in Europe, the degree of gravity that they see in it, the causes that they assume for it and the measures that they recommend. This survey demonstrates the need for the strengthening of information and awareness-raising campaigns to make the current reforms in the penal codes of the Member States known and to encourage the exchanges of information and of good practices as regards prevention of violence, of penalisation of the aggressors and of rehabilitation both of the victims and of the authors of violence acts. The results of the EUROBAROMETRE survey [26] on the perception of violence by the European citizens have been widely disseminated to the journalists' networks in the EU with a view to contributing to develop mentalities and the denounced behaviour. A number of material is used for this campaign, in particular a booklet and a TV spot, as well as a series of ideas conveyed by logos, slogans and posters which can be disseminated throughout the European Union.

By means of a call for proposals, European NGOs, in collaboration with the Member States, were invited to submit projects to relay this information while adapting it to the national, regional and local needs of the various Member States in order to reach the largest number of the European citizens. A web-site is also set up containing the information on the campaign. [27]

These examples demonstrate that important actions have been taken in recent years in the EU both in terms of establishing the issue on the European political agenda and in terms of concrete measures taken within the EU. However, this development must continue to be supported both on the European, national and local level. The Institutions of the European Union should, in co-operation with the Member States continue to assure that the issues of violence against women and trafficking in women are kept high on

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[26] Eurobarometer survey 51.0 (7/1999) on "Europeans an their views on domestic violence against women"

[27] http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg10/women/violence/index_en.html

the political agenda and that the commitments taken in the framework of the relevant Communications and Joint actions adopted are fulfilled.

***Sexual harassment***

This important issue has been on the Community agenda for many years. Following a 1987 report, which showed the lack in Member States, of appropriate means of redress in cases of sexual harassment, a recommendation on protecting the dignity of women and men at work and a *code of practice* on relevant measures were adopted by the Commission in 1991. A practical guide to implementing the code of practice was published in 1993.

In 1996, the Commission initiated a consultation of the Social Partners on potential Community action to prevent sexual harassment at work. Although the consultation revealed a general consensus among the social partners that sexual harassment has a negative impact on the working environment and that further action is needed in this area, the second stage consultation was negative, as the Social Partners declined to engage in negotiations on the issue.

In 1997, the Commission commissioned a study on "Sexual harassment at the workplace". This study is being carried out by two European universities. The evidence from these research activities shows that sexual harassment is prevalent in organisations in all surveyed countries and functions as a barrier to the integration of women in the labour market. The studies estimate that, overall, approximately 30 % to 50 % of female employees (and 10% of male employees), have experienced some form of sexual harassment. However, attention is also drawn to the fact that definitions vary as to what constitutes sexual harassment, and that any comparisons drawn between the results need to be made with caution.

***Combating violence against women through development co-operation***

The EC finances a substantial regional programme (of € 4 M), in Central America (Costa Rica, Honduras and Nicaragua), in favour of adolescent girls and single mothers. It is directed particularly at developing support for girls who have been subjected to violence or sexual abuse, providing vocational retraining courses and empowerment activities, as well as sensitising decision-makers in the government, police and judiciary to the problems of this group.

Responding to the needs expressed by local women, a large proportion of Community-funded programmes also begins to address violence against women as part of a more general development orientation. A common feature of gender-sensitive development projects is the training of women's groups to identify local needs, foster solidarity, empower disadvantaged women, increase participation in decision-making, and facilitate access to economic resources such as credit. Many of these groups identify issues such as domestic violence, rape or dowry violence as an important local need, and spontaneously initiate activities such as counselling or campaigns, which can be highly effective at the local level and are supported by the project through information, seminars, or paralegal training. As examples, such activities have become important in two rural development programmes in India and Bangladesh (EC contributions : 14 million ECU's and 9.4 million ECU's respectively) and an urban anti-poverty programme in Chile (EC contribution: 9.6 million ECUs).

Similarly, a project to support street children in Guatemala (EC contribution: 2.5 million ECU's) has provided technical support for reform of national legislation concerning violence within the family and of the civil code concerning women, and runs training and awareness courses on violence against women, girls and boys for the Guatemalan judiciary and lawyers.

In the Mediterranean region, a number of projects to combat violence against women were granted support in 1998 under the MEDA Democracy programme [28]. Violence against women : advocacy, campaigning and legal aid in Gaza (EC contribution : 100.000 ECU) – Awareness-raising initiative in the Arab countries on the legislation to combat violence against women and their implementation (EC contribution : 100.000 ECU) – Arab feminists in Support of Arab Victims of Sexual Abuse (EC contribution : 100.000 ECU).

***Women and armed conflict***

Peace is inextricably linked with equality between women and men. Only a society at peace can provide equal rights to all its members. Armed conflicts, acts of terrorism and hostage taking still persist in many parts of the world. Women are particularly affected by armed conflicts. Despite the fact that international humanitarian law and the Geneva Convention relating to the protection of Civilian Persons in time of War provide that women shall be protected against humiliating and degrading treatment, including rape, attacks on the civilian population are at times systematically employed as a war tactic. The impact of violence against women in such situations is experienced by women of all ages who as a consequence suffer traumatic experiences and often displacement. 80 % of the world's millions of refugees are women and children.

One of the main objectives of the European Union's external action is to preserve peace. [29] To achieve this aim, the European Union supports conflict prevention schemes, is active in confidence building measures to restore peace, and promotes the observance of international humanitarian law by all parties to a conflict. [30] The involvement of women in the peace process is therefore important. The European Union supports schemes including and promoting women in the peace process in the Balkan region. Meetings funded by the European Union encourage women's participation by bringing together women thinkers from warring countries, European politicians and members of international organisations to establish networks and to foster the discussion of conflict-resolution through non-violent means.

The European Union recognises that, while entire communities suffer the consequences of an armed conflict and terrorism, women and girls are specifically affected because of their status in society and their sex. Being particularly aware of the traumatic consequences women and girls suffered through the use of rape and sexual torture as a systematic war tactic in Bosnia, the European Union supported a number of projects providing psychological help and counselling to women war victims in and from Bosnia, thus taking women's specific needs into account.

Being aware that further understanding of the complexities of abuse of women is needed, the European Union supports NGOs in the development and spread of expertise on violence against women in conflict situations. NGOs which have acquired valuable experience pass on the information on gender-sensitive programmes to other NGOs and individuals through their training seminars.

The European Union supports aid programmes for uprooted people such as refugees, displaced and demobilised persons. These projects take the special requirements for women's and children's health care into account.

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[28] Budget line B7-705 – part of the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights – 10 M € in 1999.

[29] Treaty on European Union, Article J.1(2), third indent.

[30] COM(97) 357, Chapter I, Article 2, j.

The Council Resolution on integrating gender in development of 20 December 1995 refers to emergency operations, crisis prevention and the continuum to development as an emerging area where special attention should be given to gender issues. The need to expand and support the role of women in peace-making and conflict resolution is recognised in EC support to civil society initiatives in the Mediterranean region under the MEDA Democracy Programme [31] Projects funded under this programme in 1996 and 1997 include conferences on women in peace-making concerning Cyprus and Jerusalem, the promotion of Euro-Arab dialogue focusing on women, establishment of a women's encounter centre in Gaza, support to a women's cross-community group in Cyprus, and the mobilisation of women from different communities in Jerusalem (total EC support: 0.9 million ECU's). Support is also given to the promotion of women's political and electoral participation as an important element of democracy and good governance (a range of projects in Lebanon, Occupied Territories, Morocco and Jordan linked to forthcoming elections, total support 0.8 million ECU's in 1996/97.)

The Community has also provided extensive support to the resettlement of refugees in countries such as Guatemala and Nicaragua. Attention is paid to integrating to gender issues in such initiatives and accommodate needs identified by refugee women such as provision of credit, training, and improved infrastructure.

Under the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights [32], the European Union also supports projects to help women who have suffered female-specific human rights abuses. Projects are financed to assist female war victims, in particular victims of sexual torture. The EU is also engaged in action against trafficking in women and supports the running of shelters for victims of domestic violence. The European Union is active in awareness raising about issues of violence against women among medical and legal professionals dealing with victims and abusers. A substantial number of projects dealing with the rehabilitation of victims of torture and their family are funded on a yearly basis [33] and include a strong gender component.

Some of these projects are gender specific, such as the multidisciplinary Centre for Women in Tuzla (Bosnia and Herzegovina) offers education for women and girls traumatised by the war (EC contribution: 150.000 ECU). Different courses including language and computer courses are held to engage these women with work and in that way they will be encouraged to plan their future. This will certainly contribute to a process of healing and reintegration into society. Psychological as well as medical assistance and a SOS help-line for legal aid are an additional support given to these women in need. A kindergarten is also provided for young mothers so they may participate in the courses, seminars and workshops. In 1997, support was granted to the Centre for Women War Victims in Zagreb (Croatia) to provide therapy, support, accommodation and education for traumatised women and children (EC contribution : 13000 ECU). Another project supported in 1996 (EC Contribution 130.000 ECU) was a proposal for a Community rehabilitation Centre for Women victims of dowry torture and other forms of related domestic violence in India. The aim of the project was to provide a sage shelter for women victims of such violence and to help them overcome the trauma they have suffered.

Awareness-raising seminars on the issue of women, peace and conflict resolution through non-violent means in the Balkans were supported in 1996 : Give Peace a Chance – Women speak out in the Balkans

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[31] see footnote above on budget line B7-705.

[32] Chapter B7-7 of the EU budget.

[33] Budget line B7-704 – 9 M € allocated to Rehabilitation Centres in 1998.

(EC contribution 100.000 ECU); Centre for Women's Studies (Croatia) Women and the Politics of Peace (EC contribution 17.000 ECU).

Training has also been encouraged to increase the capacity of NGOs to deal with gender specific problems in conflict situations. The Humanistic Committee on Human Rights (NL) organised a programme of activities in 1996/97 (EC contribution 80.000 ECU) to provide information on the situation of women in conflict situations and to provide training to NGOs and individuals on the development of gender sensitive programmes. This project also aimed to encourage the inclusion of a gender perspective in human rights programmes.

In 1998, the Humanitarian Aid Office of the EC (ECHO) launched an international campaign 'A Flower for the Women of Kabul' at the initiative of the European Parliament. International Women's Day (8 March 1998) was dedicated to the women of Kabul, in order to focus the world's attention on the oppression these women are suffering and to do everything possible to stop the violations. Afghanistan is particularly symbolic of the oppression of women on two fronts, both as victims of a bloody conflict and as women deprived of their most basic rights and completely dependent on humanitarian aid that they can obtain only with great difficulty. This violation of women's rights flagrantly breaches the principles of international law and in particular the Beijing Declaration.

## IV. Women in power and decision-making

The promotion of women in decision-making in all fields of the society is a core objective of Community policy. In December 1996, the Council of Ministers adopted a Council Recommendation on the balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process [34], which was addressed, to Member States and the European Institutions. The content of the Recommendation corresponds to a large extent to recommendations contained in the Beijing Platform for Action. The Commission has organised a seminar (May 1998) for the senior officials in the Member States responsible for the implementation of the Recommendation in order to encourage activities in this field. In the beginning of 2000 the Commission will present a report of the implementation of the Council Recommendation on the basis of information provided by Member States and the European Institutions.

In 1998 the European Commission services facilitated an initiative presented by the Austrian Presidency discussion paper on the importance of gender disaggregated data, indicators and benchmarking in political decision-making. The Finnish Presidency has brought this process one step further, by preparing a questionnaire on women in positions of power and decision-making in the Member States. The analysis of the answers has been presented to the Council on Employment and Social Affairs in late 1999 in the form of a Presidency paper. This paper developed nine indicators for measuring progress in the field of decision making :

1. The proportion of women in the single/lower houses of the national/federal Parliaments of the Member States and in the European Parliament;
2. The proportion of women in the regional Parliaments of the Member States, where appropriate;
3. The proportion of women in the local assemblies of the Member States;
4. Policies to promote a balanced participation in political elections;

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[34] 96/694/CE in OJ L 319 of 10.12.96

5. The proportion of women of the members of the national/federal Governments and the proportion of women members of the European Commission;
6. The number of women and men senior/junior ministers in the different fields of action (portfolios/ministries) of the national/federal governments of the Member States;
7. Proportion of the highest ranking women civil servants;
8. The distribution of the highest ranking women civil servants in different fields of action;
9. The proportion of women of the members of the Supreme Courts of the Member States and the proportion of women of the members of the European Court of Justice and the Court of First Instance.

The report concluded that - whatever the sector - women are underrepresented and that an interim goal should be to have a minimum of 30% of women at all levels of power and decision-making. A lack of common concepts and problems of data were found in the area of publicly appointed committees and in government appointed delegations to international organisations and relating to candidates in public elections, that more investigation is needed before data collection principles can be laid down in these areas. These were the fields pointed out as tentative indicators for future consideration.

A high level European conference "Women and Men in Power: a caring society, a dynamic economy a vision for Europe" in Paris on 15-17 April 1999 supported by the European Commission had paved the way to this paper. The conference was organised by the French Authorities with the participation at ministerial level of 13 Member States. An important declaration was signed by the Ministers, who committed themselves to undertake action in favour of a gender balance in decision-making. The Commission committed itself to establishing a gender balance of at least 40% in scientific committees advising it.

Regarding the European Commission's personnel, the Third Action Programme on equal opportunities for women and men in the Commission (1997-2000) sets recruitment and promotion targets for those in administrative posts (A grade officials) in order to improve the participation of women in decision-making posts. The Programme aims at developing a gender-sensitive work culture, which takes account of female and male values, of difference in priorities, as well as gender specific needs. It includes the issue of equal opportunities within the overall framework of personnel policy through measures taken at all stages in the professional career of a civil servant: recruitment, training, promotion, equal opportunities legislation and policy within the Commission.

A quarter of the number of Commissioners are women. The number of women directors has increased from 3 in 1994 to 20 in 1998, and the representation of women in A grade positions as a whole has increased between 1994 and 1998 from 13% to 18%.

Aiming at encouraging women's participation, as voters and as candidates, in the European Elections of June 1999, the European Commission supported campaigning organisations by the provision of campaign material including posters and a TV spot with the slogan "Vote for a gender balance in the European Parliament". In addition, a brochure "Europe for Women and women for Europe" was published in the framework of the Fourth Action Programme was distributed in 350.000 copies in 11 languages. [35]

In addition to action on highest political level the Fourth Community Medium-term Action Programme on equal opportunities for women and men (1996-2000) is aiming at the achievement of "gender balance" -

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[35] http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg05/equ_opp/elections/elections_en.pdf

a target more pro-active and concrete than the simple promotion of women. It also highlighted not only the quantitative but also the qualitative aspect of women's participation in decision-making in terms of relevance and quality of decisions.

In 1998, 16 transnational action projects were co-financed and covered action such as a European data base on women in political decision-making, a European network of local and regional women politicians, of women elected at national assemblies, mentoring schemes for women politicians and leaders, political school on gender and politics, conferences and seminars for awareness raising on the need of a gender balance in decision making etc.

In the framework of the Action Programme, several studies on women in decision-making were published:

- Study on women in the health institutions of the EU [36] in 1997. The study focused on women's access to public and semi-public health institutions in all EU countries and the impact of women in decision making positions on the quality of decisions in this sector in three countries: Sweden, Italy and France. The study concluded that better representation of women in health decision-making is important, not only as a question of equity, but also because women bring new values, new ideas and a new style and method in decision-making.

- Similar studies in the field of finance [37] and the judiciary

- Study on the correlation of electoral systems and the representation of women in legislative assemblies in the EU/EEA countries. [38]

- Report on existing research in the European Union on women in decision-making was recently published. A transnational research team gathered and analysed all relevant research with a view to identify gaps in knowledge and potential fields for future research (see above).

***Women and decision-making in the external relations of the EU***

In the field of external relations, specific attention was paid to the training of women as decision-makers in 'Project Parity' under the Phare Democracy programme (integrated in the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights in 1998). The purpose of this project (350.000 ECU) was to increase the participation of women from Central and Eastern Europe in politics and public life. The programme contributed to empowering groups of women and to encouraging them to take part in decision-making in local and national politics and in public life.

In 1996, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (international NGO based in Switzerland) received funding to analyse and distribute the results of studies on women's participation in political decision-making in order to raise awareness among parliamentarians on the issue world-wide.

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[36] 'Gender, Power and Change in the Health Institutions in the European Union', Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1997.

[37] http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg05/publicat/equ-opp/women-finance_en.pdf

[38] "Electoral systems in Europe: a gender impact assessment" study undertaken for the European Commission, DGV by M. Leijenaar and K. Niemöller for P&D Analytics Netherlands and M. Leaver and Y. Galligan for the Policy Institute, Trinity College, Ireland. January 1999. Available at DG Employment/D/5.

In 1997, a programme on women's human rights and participation in Democracy development was supported in Croatia (EC contribution 100.000 ECU) aimed at raising awareness of women's status in society and improving women's legal, political, economic and health status.

In the Mediterranean region in 1998, projects were supported in Lebanon and Turkey to encourage the political involvement of women, as well as their political participation and the representation of their interests (EC contribution: 125.000 and 140.000 ECU).

***Examples of obstacles encountered/lessons learned***

Obstacles have been encountered that are of both institutional and awareness raising order. Institutions are often reluctant to adapt their mechanisms and procedures in order to facilitate the promotion of women in decision-making. Budgets devoted to this objective are also often very limited. Awareness raising campaigns and sensitisation of decision-makers are crucial for developing actions in this field. Neither men nor women are always convinced that a gender balance in decision-making will enhance the political, economic and social performance of societies and the European Union. Campaigns and other actions aiming at informing the public are helpful to overcome direct and indirect resistance.

Assessment of experiences in different Member States tends to reveal that legislative and regulatory measures (including quota and targets) are very important for making progress. Political commitment at the highest level is documented as being of crucial importance to enhance the presence of women on nomination lists. In fact, their presence among electoral candidates may be superior to their presence in elected posts. Electoral systems and nomination schemes need to be redesigned taking into consideration the objective of a balanced participation in decision-making posts.